where to be!
CHILLICOTHE
VISITORS BUREAU

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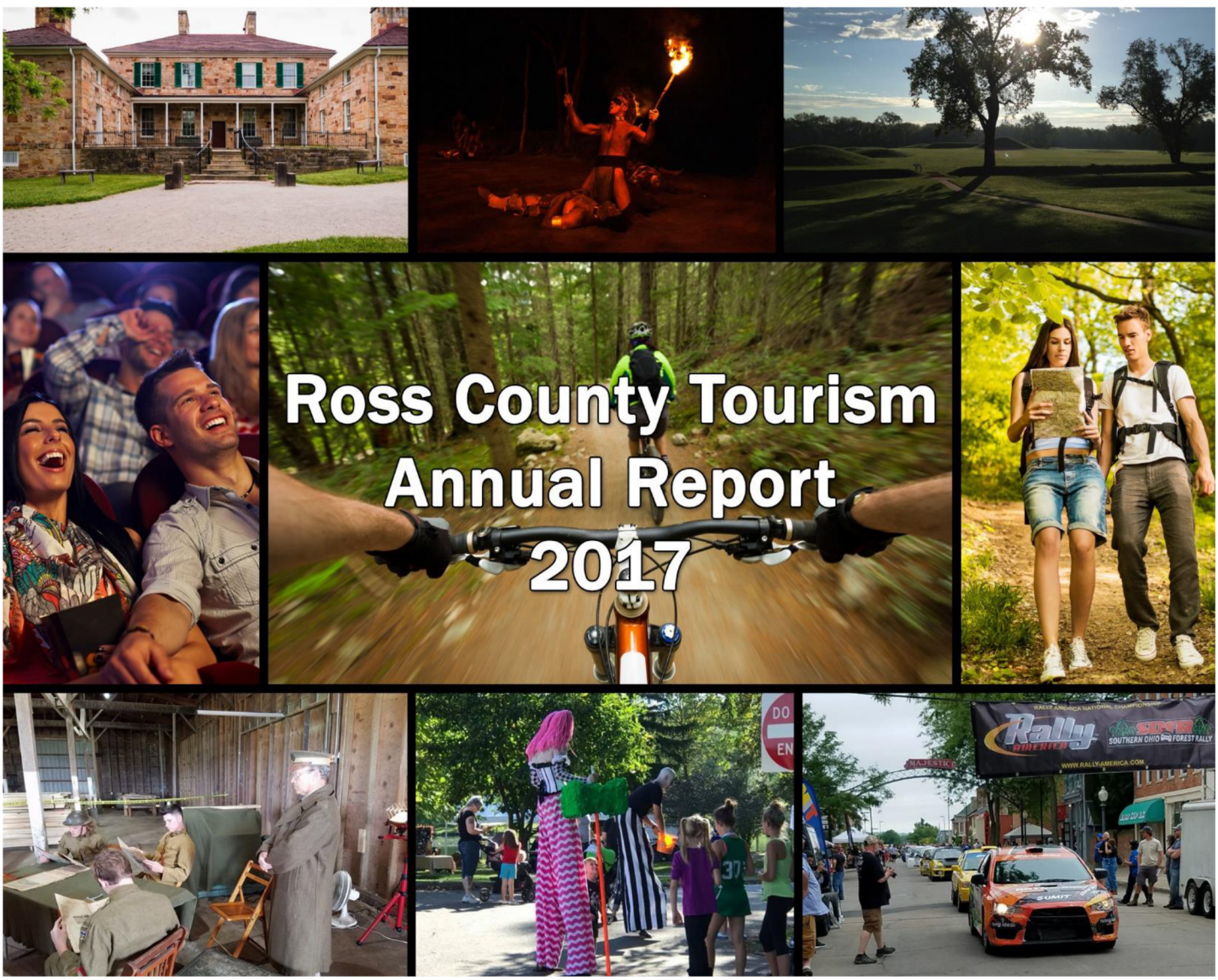

Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau

230 N. Plaza Blvd.
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601
www.VisitChillicotheOhio.com

LETTER FROM CVB PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Greetings,

Stopping to think about travel and hospitality during 2017 evokes a lot of emotion and pride for residents of Ross County and for the State of Ohio. For the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau (the RCCVB), the organization devoted to the tourism industry, continued commitment to attracting visitors to this relatively small southeastern area of the State never fails to motivate and excite.

Carefully peruse and enjoy this 2017 Annual Report. We are proud of it because it underscores the efforts that have contributed to what continues to be a "much bigger business" than most individuals realize. To the countless individuals, tourism partners and entities involved, we are most grateful.

Outdoor recreation, action and adventure, family fun, history and culture, concerts, events and festivals – all with their own unique contributions – make Chillicothe and Ross County a premier destination for just about anyone. Once in the area, that "reason" behind the visit is complimented and enhanced by area hotels and lodging facilities, shopping, restaurants and so much more. Obviously, the economic impact of the tourism industry is a source of pride to be appreciated, nurtured and marketed.

2017 was highlighted, of course, by the Camp Sherman Commemorative Centennial in July. The calendar, however, was dotted with other highlights – a new Children's Museum, a first-time Halloween Festival, a hugely successful relay race, Adena Mansion's birthday party for Thomas Worthington, a St. Patrick's Day fundraiser for Tecumseh, and edging ever-more-closely to World Heritage status for the Hopewell Earthworks – to name just a few.

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau has so much to brand, to market, to showcase and to promote as the Bureau and its Board of Directors drive tourism into and through an exciting 2018. Chillicothe and Ross County can mean adventure for some or memories for others … but a unique and meaningful reason to "Come Again" for one and all.

Melody Young
Executive Director

David M. Polk
President

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau (RCCVB) invested $152,263.89 in advertising and marketing Ross County as a tourism destination. This investment in advertising represents an 8% increase when compared to 2016. Advertisements were distributed through print materials, digital advertisements, trade/travel shows and through RCCVB partnerships. Advertisements targeting leisure travelers were distributed in numerous geographical areas outside of Ross County to encourage overnight stays at local lodging facilities. Group tour operators were targeted through leads generated by the Bureau's membership in *Ohio Has It*, an industry-led marketing partnership that showcases the experiences that Ohio has to offer for motorcoach groups.

Continuing the approach established several years ago, the Bureau continued to fine tune its advertising and marketing plan to target leisure visitors. The process included analyzing ad placement, ad sizes, cost, and interest of the audience. This process assisted the Bureau in making informed decision when selecting avenues for advertising and ensuring that an ideal ad was being displayed to the targeted audience. By using this method, the Bureau could showcase Ross County attractions to meet visitors' interests based upon knowledge of the readership or specified demographics placed with digital advertisements. One of the most important advertisement piece is the official *Ross County Visitors Guide* that is distributed through Travel Information Centers (TICs) in Ohio and in select neighboring states. These guides are also distributed through the Bureau's office, travel shows, visitor request, area attractions and through partnering Visitors Bureaus around the state.

Online advertising continues to grow in the travel industry and as a platform for destination marketing organizations. Staying with the current trend, the Bureau implemented digital banner ads on popular sites such as *Ohio Traveler* and *LongWeekends* websites. The banner ads provide a quick captivating glimpse and provides users a clickable, direct link to the Bureau's website to learn more. The *Ohio Travel Guide* continues to be available in print format, but has also launched a mobile app for visitors to gain information. As part of the advertising package with *Great Lakes Publishing*, Ross County is represented in a full page digital ad within the app. Additionally, the use of Google's Adwords was a continued practice to direct potential visitors to the Bureau's website by using keywords relevant to Ross County attractions.

Beyond online advertising and print media, the Bureau continues to build its online presence through social media. By using these social outlets, the Bureau can stay connected with its followers. The Bureau implemented a weekly "Facebook Live" segment to its social media schedule. This segment is used to network with our attractions and lodging partners while promoting what is available in Ross County. This addition has assisted the Bureau with increasing its interactions and followers on social media by 14% when compared to the previous year. This part of the marketing segment is another avenue to connect with younger generations.

Overall, Ross County's tourism sector held strong throughout 2017 with lodging tax receipts increasing 9% over the previous year. Many attractions reported having an increase in attendance to their locations. The Bureau feels that tourism will continue to grow throughout the county as Ross County continues to evolve and thrive with new events, more outdoor recreation, the many historical aspects of the area, the growth of local shopping and dining options, and the continued effort to inscribe Hopewell Culture National Historical Park as a World Heritage destination.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017

LODGING TAX

After another successful year in tourism for Ross County, the Bureau is excited to report that 2017 was another record breaking year for lodging tax remittance. Over the course of 2017, the Bureau received a total of $333,319.97 in lodging tax receipts, a 9% increase over 2016. This increase is a direct result of the efforts the Bureau puts into its marketing plan to target leisure travelers.

NEW LOCATION

The Bureau completed its first-full year in its new location on North Plaza Blvd. Since its move, the Bureau has been able to assist more visitors seeking information on Ross County/Chillicothe.

Additional signage has helped direct visitors to the Bureau. Staff has worked with Ross County to install "Tourist Information" signs at the Bridge Street & N. Plaza Blvd. intersection. Beyond this signage, the Bureau received approval from the Ohio Department of Transportation for signage that will be placed on Route 35 & Route 23.

CAMP SHERMAN DAYS

Camp Sherman Days was a nine-day commemoration event that took place in July. 2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the United States entering World War I, this centennial event was planned to commemorate the role that Ross County's Camp Sherman played in training the "doughboys".

Ross County housed the third largest training camp in 1917 which encompassed over 2,000 acres of land. During the commemoration, attendees were given guided bus tours of the grounds, toured and learned about modern soldier training, and witnessed a "Vaudeville" production which was the entertainment of the time-period.

Many individuals and organizations came together to organize and execute this event. Local attractions planned events around the commemoration, some included extensive exhibits for the event. In addition to residents, many visitors came to Ross County to partake in the events to learn about Camp Sherman.

ATTRACTIONS

Ross County saw an overall 5% increase in visitors to area attractions in 2017. Compared to the previous year, 2017 had an additional 5,608 visitors. Obtaining these metrics from partners assists the Bureau measure effectiveness of its marketing and advertising strategies.

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park (HOCU) reported the largest attendance of visitors to the Park totaling 60,897. The largest increase was held by the Chillicothe Railroad Museum with a 17% increase over 2016. The Scioto Society continued to add programming to extend their season beyond the annual-run of the "Tecumseh" Outdoor Drama and has seen an increase of 9% through their Bluegrass Concert Series, Shakespeare on Sugarloaf, and Haunted Mountain.

One segment of outdoor recreation that received additional attention was trails for mountain bikes. A group working on a Master Trails Plan has been working to establish maintenance and expansion of trails for bikes. This group ended the year by holding community input meetings in Chillicothe, Bainbridge, Kingston and Richmond Dale to obtain feedback from the community as they continue their efforts.

LODGING FACILITIES

Ross County's lodging facilities expanded in 2017 with the full-year operation of the Fairfield Inn & Suites and the opening of a county bed & breakfast, Hillside Haven.

The opening of the Fairfield Inn & Suites created an additional 81-rooms to the Chillicothe/Ross County lodging market. Hillside Haven brings a unique cabin escape feel with the amenities of a bed & breakfast.

Unfortunately, at the end of 2017 the announcement came that Stoney Creek Cottage would close its doors to guests and would be placed on the market.

As tourism continues to grow in Ross County, and Hopewell Culture National Historical Park continues to work towards World Heritage inscription, it's expected to see additional lodging facilities open their doors.

NEW EVENTS & ATTRACTIONS

2017 was a year for Ross County to host new events. In addition to the centennial commemoration of Camp Sherman Days, Ross County hosted several special events that are scheduled to return annually. The Buck Fifty, a 150-mile overnight relay-race held their first race in April with much success. The Southern Ohio Forest Rally brought rally racing back to southern Ohio and in to Scioto Trail State Park as the third-leg of the national championship. The Chillicothe Halloween Festival brought a fall festival back in to downtown Chillicothe and has scheduled dates to continue in 2018.

Going beyond the events, Chillicothe now has a new attraction geared towards the youth. The Mighty Children's Museum opened their doors in the fall. Visitors to this new museum will have the opportunity to get hands-on with the exhibits.

PROMOTIONAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

The Ross-Chillicothe CVB offers an annual Promotional Assistance Program to help support emerging attractions and events in the community. With these funds, the Bureau can help contribute to the success of attractions and events. The program was developed to allow the Bureau to give back to the community, and assist organizers in promotion of an activity. Thus, creating awareness and the potential for tourism to Ross County.

Eligible grant requests are reviewed and selected by the Promotional Assistance committee of the Bureau's Board of Directors. Awarded funds are presented to the recipients during the CVB's annual Tourism Banquet in May.

In 2017, the Ross-Chillicothe CVB had the most requests than any past year, and awarded seven organizations funding ranging between $250 to $2,500. These organizations include:

- The Buck Fifty
- ChilliTown MX
- Adena Mansion & Gardens
- Feast of the Flowering Moon
- Lucy Hayes Heritage Center
- Chillicothe Halloween Festival
- Mystery Manor

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau has always endorsed the importance of being involved in the community in which it is promoting. By employees participating with area organizations' boards and committees, the Bureau can partner with organizers to build a stronger tourism destination for Ross County.

Melody Young, RCCVB Executive Director, was active throughout 2017 and was a board member for the Chillicothe Kiwanis Club, Adena Mansion & Gardens, The Scioto Society, Ohio Appalachian Country, the Convention & Facilities Authority (CFA), the Majestic Theatre, the World Heritage Steering Committee, and regularly attends and participates in the Ohio Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (OACVB) and the Ohio Travel Association (OTA).

Gene Betts, RCCVB Communication Assistant, was likewise very active and serves as a board member for the Majestic Theatre, Feast of the Flowering Moon, and the Chillicothe Halloween Festival.

Christy Throckmorton, RCCVB Office Manager, joined the team in 2017 and participates locally on the Feast of the Flowering Moon and Chillicothe Halloween Festival board of directors, as well as serving on the Ohio Festival & Events Association.

WEBSITE STATS

	2017	2016
Visits	72,027	63,820
Users	52,859	47,776
Pageviews	160,142	150,637

With a continued focus on ensuring a strong online presence and through expanding digital advertising, the Bureau is excited to report a 12.86% increase in sessions for its website, with a 10.64% increase of users accessing the site.

This translates to marketing efforts that supports potential visitors were able to discover Ross County's attractions, lodging options, shopping & dining choices and the many events taking place throughout the county.

The RCCVB's major source of social networking was via Facebook which the page had a 14% increase in followers during 2017. The Bureau also utilized Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube.

AD PLACEMENT

Ohio Travel Guide
Ohio Magazine
Ohio Appalachian Country Brochure
LongWeekends Magazine
CincinnatiRefined.com
Go Ohio Valley
Ohio Traveler
Adventure Outdoor Magazine
Road Runner Magazine
Travel Midwest Magazine
American Antiquities
iHeartMedia
Pickaway County Visitors Guide
Mason County, WV Visitors Guide
Chillicothe Gazette
Lancaster Eagle
Newark Advocate
Zanesville Times
Coshocton Tribune
Columbus Dispatch
Daily Jeffersonian
Perry County Tribune
Logan Daily News
Vinton County Courier
Athens Messenger
The Scioto Society

DIGITAL ADVERTISING

As the millennial generation continues to grow, the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau wants to be on the forefront of their minds as they plan their travels. In the past several years, the Bureau has put more focus on their digital advertising presence through Google's AdWords and social media marketing. However, to make a bigger presence in the online marketing world, the Bureau has contracted with Brick Street Marketing to deliver digital advertisements on a much larger scale for 2018.

As part of this advertising package, the Bureau will be specifically target audiences through their online usage. This includes websites that consumers have visited, keyword searches they have performed, plus a geographical area that was set in place by the Bureau to encourage overnight stays. These digital ads will be displayed on some of the largest national and regional websites.

MAJESTIC THEATRE EXPANSION

The Majestic Theatre will begin their capital improvement expansion in the spring. With the addition, the Majestic Theatre will have modern facilities including an easily accessible lobby and restrooms. These improvements will allow the Bureau to further market the historic venue as an option for meetings, conference and presentations.

2019-2020 VISITORS GUIDE

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau has again contracted with Great Lakes Publishing to compile the next edition of the official *Ross County Visitors Guide* for 2019-2020. This will be the third edition that Great Lakes Publishing has produced for the Bureau.

Plans are to continue with a "storybook" feel, allowing our historic ancestors such as Tecumseh, Thomas Worthington and Nathaniel Massie to tell their stories about local attractions. This allows the readers to have an advanced connection to the sites and Ross County prior to their visit.

FIFTH ANNUAL TOURISM BANQUET

The Bureau will continue the tradition in 2018, by hosting the Fifth Annual Tourism Banquet on Monday, May 7th at the Christopher Conference Center. This annual banquet was started by the Bureau to celebrate the local tourism industry with partners while serving as a kick-off event for the tourism season. Dates for the banquet are selected in conjunction with the National Travel & Tourism Week.

During the banquet, the Bureau recognizes some of the "best of the best" in local tourism through their Pineapple Awards. Partners nominate their best employees and share examples of how these individuals go above and beyond their job description to be nominated for the award. Nominations can be made from management, peers or volunteers who notice someone doing great work in the hospitality industry.

As previous years, the Pineapple Awards will have four categories in which to nominate:
- Front Line Associate of the Year
- Behind the Scenes Associate of the Year
- Volunteer of the Year
- Director / Innkeeper of the Year

The Bureau also presents an organization or individual with the "Grand Pineapple" award. These individuals are ones who excel in their partnership with the Bureau and assists with promoting Ross County as a destination throughout the year.

MASTER TRAILS PLAN

Efforts continue to expand the number of trails offered in Ross County, specifically for mountain bike riders. At the end of 2017, members held community input meetings throughout the county to receive feedback. The majority in attendance at these meetings strongly support the additions.

The goal is to have a minimum of 50-miles of trails for mountain biking. This would then allow Ross County to be considered as a biking destination, and the potential to attract bike festivals and other recreation that may generate tourism and overnight stays in Ross County.

AUTUMN TOURISM

The tourism season continues to extend further into the year with the addition of Halloween attractions. Autumn generates tourism from those who enjoy the fall-foliage and outdoor game, but Halloween and haunted attractions are becoming a larger part of October tourism.

The Scioto Society has announced a new production to their lineup to expand the "Haunted Mountain" event. For the 2018 season, they have contracted to bring a "Sleepy Hollow Experience" to Ross County. It's a production of the legend, but will go beyond to immerse visitors into the world of Sleepy Hollow starting from the moment they arrive.

In addition to the haunted trails, 2017 brought another attraction to Ross County with the Chillicothe Halloween Festival. Organizers for the event have confirmed the dates for 2018 with plans to grow the festival to include more haunted activities as part of the festivities.

FESTIVAL MILESTONE

Last year Bainbridge's Fall Festival of Leaves celebrated its 50th anniversary, and this year, Chillicothe's Feast of the Flowering Moon marks its 35th milestone. The annual event takes place over Memorial Day weekend and features Native American dancers, drummers and vendors.

CO-OP MARKETING

The Bureau plans to continue to offer opportunities to help partners market and advertise their attractions through cost-sharing Co-Op Marketing. Through this type of advertising, the Bureau can purchase larger advertisements that feature multiple locations, giving potential visitors a glimpse of what they can do and experience when visiting Ross County.

Since the introduction to this opportunity in 2016, the Bureau has been able to publish a two-page advertisement, twice per year through Ohio Magazine in which attractions and lodging facilities are showcased to readers.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

David M. Polk, President
Stoney Creek Cottage

Patti Cavender, Vice-President
Sunroom at the Brick

Randy Davies, Treasurer
Chamber of Commerce

Eric Woodworth, Past-President
Hampton Inn & Suites

Nancy Ames,
At-Large / Education

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Eileen Hatfield,
Fall Festival of Leaves

Tom Kuhn,
Ross County Heritage Center

Beth Neal,
City Council

Charlie Ortman,
Ross County Engineer

Brandon Smith,
Tecumseh Outdoor Drama

Kathy Styer,
Adena Mansion & Gardens

Bryan Wickline,
Chillicothe Paints

CVB STAFF

Melody Young
Executive Director

Gene Betts
Communication Assistant

Christy Throckmorton
Office Manager

2017 MEMBERSHIPS / AFFILIATIONS

Local
Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce
Ross County Historical Society
Adena Mansion & Gardens
Tecumseh Outdoor Drama
Pump House Center for the Arts
Downtown Associates
Chillicothe Kiwanis Club
Friends of Hopewell
Friends of Lucy Hayes Heritage Center
Feast of the Flowering Moon
Majestic Theatre
Southern Ohio Storytelling Festival
Chillicothe Paints

State
Tourism Ohio
Ohio Association of Convention & Visitors Bureau (OACVB)
Ohio Travel Association
Ohio History Connection
Ohio Traveler
Ohio Appalachian Country
Ohio Has It

RCCVB MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Ross-Chillicothe Convention and Visitors Bureau is the growth and prosperity of area economic development through tourism. The Bureau's primary focus is to assist, attract and educate residents, travelers, and partners. It will function as an economic driver of the hospitality industry in general through promotion of extended or overnight visits to the areas of Chillicothe and Ross County, Ohio.

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